

DEPARTMENT OF
STATE

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Produced by
the Political-
Economic
Section

US Embassy
Yaoundé

Yaoundé Snapshot

SPRING 2011

Investing in People:

U.S. Agriculture Expert Travels to Eastern Refugee Food Program

John Lamm, of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, travelled to Cameroon in early February to evaluate a local purchase program, and to discuss a new feeding program set to begin in March. The United States is the only country currently giving assistance to refugees in eastern Cameroon, where there are about 90,000 refugees from the Central Africa Republic. Since 2008, the American government has dispersed about \$18 million to Cameroonian feeding programs via the World Food Program (WFP). The program to begin in March is aimed at long-term food self-sufficiency and was created in conjunction with the U.S. Department of State Bureau of Population and Migration.

Fostering Economic Prosperity:

Farm Program Wraps Up with Success & Lessons

A 12 billion CFA program to increase food production in Cameroon, funded by United States Department of Agriculture, helped farmers make long-term changes, according to a recent report by the GRC. The Food for Progress (FFP) Program began in January 2007 and ended in September 2010. The report cited reduction of post-harvest losses and widespread adoption of improved technology as two of its successes. However, it noted that about \$1 million of the \$4.1 million program appears have been misspent, and that recovery and documentation of these funds continues.

FFP can count the creation of local, small-scale food driers and mills as one of its achievements, as well as new tree nurseries and demonstration plots; rural resource centers; and new organizations to relay technology. In addition, more than 10,000 farmers are now using new domestication techniques for indigenous and fruit trees, thanks to the program. Future programs to increase food security in the West and Northwest Regions could draw on the successful practices used by FFP. Its problems with fund accountability could also be a valuable lesson for future USG-GRC joint projects.

Farm Program Wraps Up with Success & Lessons

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The World Agro-Forestry Centre and local NGOs implemented the program. The Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Economy, Planning, and Regional Development (MINEPAT) supervised its steering committee. The Secretary worked with US Embassy Yaounde to produce the final report.

Fostering Economic Prosperity:

U.S. Megaport Experts Visit Port of Douala

A team of six American experts in the field of megaports studied the Douala port during a visit to Cameroon from January 31 to February 5. The team observed port operations, and met with officials from several government agencies concerning security, administration, operations, and engineering. In Yaoundé, the experts paid a courtesy call on Minister of Transport Bello Bouba. The group plans to return in May 2011 to present hands-on training to mid- and senior-level government officials.

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Ebolowa Agricultural Fair: A Springboard to an Improved Economy by 2035?

All roads in Cameroon led to Ebolowa during January in celebration of the Ebolowa National Agro-Pastoral Show, generally referred to as the Comice Agro-Pastoral. From January 17 to 22, Cameroon's best crop and livestock farmers partnered with the Ministries of Agriculture and Scientific Research to exhibit Cameroon's agro-pastoral potential. The fair was well attended at the temporary Agricultural Village, where agriculture exhibits covered 40 hectares of state land. About 1,200 crop farmers, livestock farmers, fishery researchers, and other individuals involved in food production and transformation were selected from all Administrative Divisions in Cameroon to attend. President Biya's address at the opening ceremony highlighted Cameroon's determination to grow into an emerging economy by 2035 through improved agricultural productivity. He presented a list of promises stretching from road network improvement in the South to the creation of a fertilizer-producing firm. Cameroon used this forum to exhibit its agricultural potential and part of its strategic plan to fight against food insecurity. Several areas were highlighted to show the importance of the link between research and agriculture, including national strategies to improve rice and other crops, and the use of biotechnology for animal and plant breeding. Ambassador Robert P. Jackson attended the opening ceremony, highlighting the U.S. Government's en-

Ambassador Jackson attended this Agriculture showcase and meeting, which was opened by President Biya.

Ebolowa Fair, continued from previous page

engagement in contributing towards food security in Cameroon. Over a dozen of USDA Food for Progress (FFP) beneficiaries selected from the North West and West regions were the happy flag bearers from their Divisions. The main recipient agencies of 2005 and 2006 joined the Ministry of Scientific Research in presenting innovations in agricultural technology attained with support from the U.S. Government. Demonstration plots exhibited disease-resistant crop seeds and breeds of cattle that resulted from biotechnological development. A researcher who had benefitted from the U.S. Government's Borlaug Fellowship Program led in the fishery sector. Furthermore, the pool of equipment shown in action indicated a green light towards improved productivity through mechanization in Cameroon.

The 2011 Comice provided a springboard for Cameroon's drive towards an improved economy by 2035. However, there remains a general desire to place a greater emphasis on strategic partnerships with external entities. Using USG support, Cameroon could improve agricultural planning and bring about food self-sufficiency as well as an improved economy in general.

Building Peace and Security:

US Involved in Fight against Human Trafficking

On January 11th, Ambassador Jackson met with Marie Therèse Obama épouse Abena Ondo, Cameroon's Minister of Women's Empowerment and Family. The Ambassador underscored the contribution of U.S. Peace Corps volunteers to gender and youth development in rural areas and pointed to the need for a memorandum of understanding between the Peace Corps and the Ministry. The Ambassador encouraged participation of women and youth in the 2011 election and suggested that there may be opportunities to join efforts against trafficking, particularly trafficking of women and children. Minister Obama agreed on the importance of an agreement with Peace Corps. She pointed to numerous programs to educate women marginalized from society and to the presence of Vocational and Empowerment Centers around the country. The Ambassador brought to the Minister's attention Heiffer International's work in Cameroon and described its activities as a successful model for addressing economic and development challenges facing the country.

The National Commission on Human Rights and Freedoms recently released its 2009 annual report.

The report acknowledges efforts being made in some areas, but points out that the principles stated in a great number of national and international instruments are yet to be fully adhered to in Cameroon.

Building Peace and Security:

National Human Rights and Freedoms Commission Reports on Progress in Cameroon

On January 26, 2011, the National Commission on Human Rights and Freedoms officially presented its 2009 activity Report and the 2009 Report on the State of Human Rights in Cameroon, during a ceremony organized at the Conference Center in Yaoundé. Invited to attend the presentation ceremony, the US Embassy was represented by Jacques Kateu, Embassy translator and political assistant. The highlights of the ceremony included a video projection on the Commission, a speech by the Commission's Chairperson, Presentation of the Reports, and a question/answer session.

The Activity Report focuses on the achievements of the Commission in 2009, highlighting shortcomings and constraints, including non-compliance of the relevant law with the Paris Principles, lack of collaboration from some government services and inadequate funding and staffing. It emerges from the Report that 16 forms of human rights violation were identified in 2009; with the right to security being the most frequently violated right. Recommendations are formulated to improve the way the Commission operates, including mainstreaming human rights concerns in the budgets of government entities, amending the law setting up the NCHRF, and ensuring political validation of the National Program for Human Rights Education, and of the National Action Plan for the promotion and protection of Human Rights.

The Report on the State of Human Rights brings out some facts about the situation of Human Rights in Cameroon, as observed and investigated throughout the national territory. These relate to the right to life, the right to physical and moral integrity, arbitrary arrests and detentions, de facto impunity granted forces of law and order, judicial delays, detention conditions, Chiefdoms and traditional values, freedom of press and of opinion, harassment at airports, social and cultural rights, the rights of special groups, the fight against corruption, collaboration with government services, etc. It also attempts an analysis of issues on the State of Human Rights in Cameroon as denounced by AMNESTY International in a January 2009 report, pointing out that while the said report contains some authentic facts, the information released is misleading in many regards. In conclusion, the Report acknowledges efforts being made in some areas, but points out that the principles stated in a great number of national and international instruments are yet to be fully adhered to. If produced in a timely manner, the Report may be a useful source of information in our annual Human Rights reporting process.